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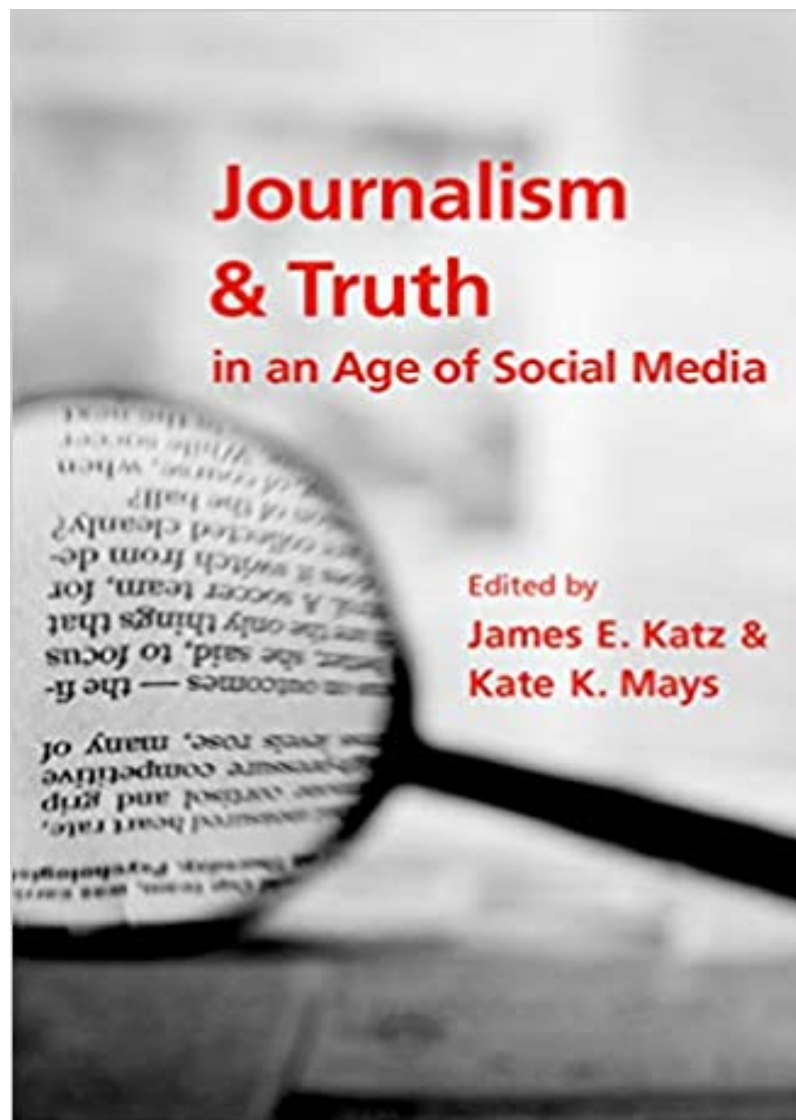
Journalism & Truth
in an Age of Social Media

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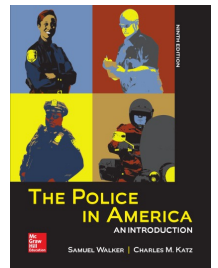
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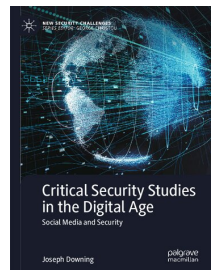
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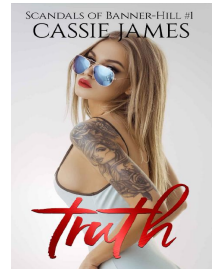
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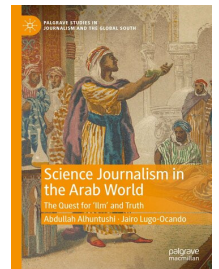https://ebookmass.com/product/literary-journalism-and-social-justice-robert-alexander/

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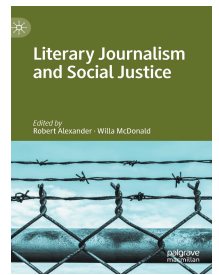
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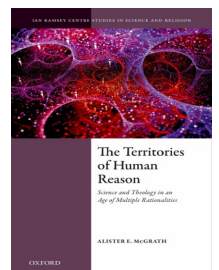
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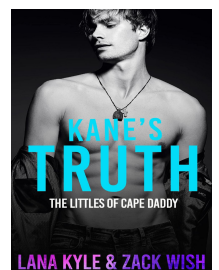
Journalism and Truth in an Age of Social Media

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Edited by

JAMES E. KATZ AND KATE K. MAYS

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Preface

There is an old story concerning squabbling umpires in the traditional American game of baseball. As many readers know, their job includes judging whether a baseball pitched to a hitter crosses through a certain specified zone, which is imaginary, called a strike zone, or outside of it, in which case the pitch is (confusingly) called a ball. Three strikes and the hitter is out, four balls and the hitter moves to first base. The three umpires take turns characterizing their judgmental process. The first umpire says, "I call them as best as I can see them." The second umpire says, "That's not good enough. I call them as what they really are." The third umpire says, "What they are is what I call them."

In a rudimentary way, this simple story of three umpires characterizes a view about the way journalists proceed. What is reality, and therefore what can be deemed true, is at least for the game of baseball in the hands of the umpires. For journalists, it's a bit more complicated. Yet this anecdote lays out the problem of what journalists perceive and reproduce for their audience in terms of the truth.

The situation is made all the more thorny by the advent of so-called fake news and other forms that depart from the legitimate and fair pursuit of facts in order to report the news. Although we will say more about this in Chapter 1, we can at this point add a fourth umpire to the hoary story, who would say, "I just call the pitch as anything I want, just as I feel at the moment; indeed, I can make up the whole game." This example is one form of fake news, which is itself an old game, reaching back into the mists of time long before baseball was invented. Another type of fake news is when perpetrators profoundly believe in the truth of their views and resist all evidence. ("All pitches made by that team are balls," would be an apt formulation.)

A variation on this theme of unfair perception is bias. Despite the fact that this form of perspective taking in journalism may be fully acknowledged, bias itself is more often subtle, and to the extent the possibility is acknowledged, tends to be downplayed. Yet it is far-reaching and pernicious,

and may be formulated in our metaphor as, "While I think of myself as fair, I privately favor one team. But I am not biased; if my calls favor my preferred team, it's only because I know they are better." In such cases, the "team" may be a personality, ideology, country, or social class. While often unconscious, bias is not fake news in terms of the latter's qualities of pure fabrication and intentional misleading, yet it does cumulatively distort public perceptions, likely more strongly than any fake news onslaughts to date. Yet, like much of formal fake news, there is no easy fix for this problem.

These concerns over whether news is accurate and whether the press is a fair umpire are certainly long-standing. Yet, after the Brexit vote, and most especially since the unexpected election of Donald J. Trump as president of the United States in 2016, the intellectual world has been set alight by concerns over fake news. Opinions vary as to what fake news is, and multiple, often nuanced, definitions and distinctions have been proposed (Tandoc, Lim, and Ling 2018). Opinions also vary as to the import of fake news, which has been characterized across a range, from a manageable problem, to dangerously threatening, to already devastatingly consequential. According to a good many commentators, fake news has altered the trajectory of world history, including, as mentioned, the Brexit vote and the election of Mr. Trump, and, in the case of Emmanuel Macron, almost derailed the will of the electorate. Unsurprisingly and appropriately, there have been a flood of popular and academic publications addressing the fake news problem, and this volume adds to that discussion in several of our chapters.

But it also follows the trail in the opposite direction by asking how journalists pursue the truth in their work, and how audiences receive and perceive the truth value of what journalists produce. It's easy enough to outline the book's aim, which is to shed light on these issues, but questions of identifying, characterizing, and communicating the truth has been a nettlesome problem for millennia. Indeed, the definition of what is truth and the identification of what about the world is true is a vast society-wide enterprise encompassing religious and political institutions, not to mention scientific and judicial bodies. Here we focus on but one institution: the journalistic enterprise.

As complicated as the search for truth has been historically, the situation has become even more so with the onslaught of social media. As to its

effects on journalism, many readers will be familiar with the major changes wrought by social media. These include

- dramatic changes in the economic model of revenue for newspapers in particular and the news industry in general;
- downsizing of newspaper staff and newsrooms generally—newsroom employment has dropped by about 25% in 1998 compared to a decade earlier (Grieco 2018);
- accessibility and use of undercover videos, bystander cell phone videos, angry tweets, and other sources of compelling documentation of questionable or improper behavior (Gordon 2018);
- increased accountability for reporters' activities, both in terms of management from above and public reception of their handiwork; this includes monitoring by click counts and reader responses as well as possible detection of plagiarism for instance;
- fragmentation of the media environment and personalization of distribution channels; this has the dual effect of both presenting content out of context and on the same "playing field," and giving consumers tailored lists of news that may only render a particular and narrow worldview;
- largely unknown algorithmic mechanisms that are potentially powerful gatekeepers, elevating some viewpoints while limiting others, depending on the (opaque) technological parameters of each platform. This in turn has raised pointed questions about bias, representation, and fairness.

Readers may recognize how some of the above technological advances have given rise to the widely discussed fake news phenomenon, which we argue is neither entirely new nor entirely old hat. Nevertheless, it is justifiably a hot topic.

As some of our contributors put forth, fake news can encompass everything from sarcastic or ironic humor (as in the case of stories being picked up from the Babylon Bee) all the way to bot-driven, made-up stories. Yet it also includes the use of incomplete or misleadingly selective framing of stories, adjectives used in the story, and photographs that editorially convey certain characteristics. In fact, fake news has come to encompass so much that a group at Harvard's Shorenstein Center has created an entire

"Information Disorder" toolkit that includes a glossary for all the terms relevant to today's information environment. Like the term "social media," which we discuss more in the introduction, we use the term "fake news" capaciously. If people would like an exhaustive definition that once and for all allows journalistic efforts to be judged true or not, we have to disappoint them. Rather than laser-focus on fake news as a current phenomenon, we address truth in journalism, as it has in the past and continues to operate in politics, and how technology may be complicating that relationship. In all aspects, journalism is a social enterprise, with many players and roles, which not only include creators but also audiences, and not only production but also assimilation and response.

A word is in order about the book's audience. Our contributors and we have written this book for the sophisticated general reader, those interested in the social consequences of emerging media on information and truth, as well as the community of journalism studies scholars, which range from active journalists to researchers, and most especially to students. The volume seeks to connect the worlds of practical journalism and philosophical inquiry, when both often proceed without the other. For students learning the craft, it is important to know how to not only practice it but also to be aware of the larger context and intellectual import of what they are doing. Likewise, for students who tend to look at abstract ethical issues and are focused on analytical philosophy, they might find their deliberations enriched by an understanding of the craft and practical constraints of journalism.

This collection should also be of interest to scholars working in fields related to emerging media, a relatively new field of study that is expanding rapidly and crisscrosses multiple disciplines. As such, the approach is inherently interdisciplinary in nature, encompassing philosophy, behavioral and social sciences, human interaction, and digital and communication studies, among others. In terms of its aim at journalists, the book provides a lens to study both the evolving craft of journalism and considers larger questions about the social effects of emerging technologies, such as the growing role of algorithms, big data, and automatic-content production regimes. Journalism scholars can look to this volume to keep pace with systemic technological advancements and their effects on the practices of journalistic production and information dissemination. Moreover, scholars working in varied disciplines such as computational studies, sociology, media and communication, philosophy, and political science, who study issues related

to information diffusion and truth, may find the volume useful for understanding emerging media's relevance to and implications for their respective fields. While the book emphasizes what is new and novel, by drawing on historical perspectives it also considers what is enduring and consistent. We should also mention the international scope of our contributors and their coverage as it goes beyond exclusively US-centric concerns.

We assembled this collection of expert analyses in large part to serve as a tool for classroom instruction. As we developed the book, several journalism instructors expressed enthusiasm for adopting such a book for their courses. If it sparks among our readers greater understanding of and interest in the topic of social media as part of the journalistic endeavor, our goal will have been achieved.

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Acknowledgments

speed and facility in achieving such scholarly benchmarks. He is a remarkable colleague.

On behalf of co-editor Kate Mays, the chapter authors, and myself, I express heartfelt thanks to the colleagues who have done so much to help bring this volume to fruition.

James E. Katz
Kenmore Square, Boston
Thanksgiving, 2018

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1

Introduction

James E. Katz and Kate K. Mays

In 1998, at the beginning of the Internet era, the senior editor of this volume wrote an article discussing challenges to truth in the emerging online arena. Entitled "Struggle in Cyberspace: Fact and Friction on the World Wide Web" (Katz 1998), he predicted that the Internet would lead to challenges to the received societal wisdom and lead to the proliferation of false information, including news. He held: "Among the consequences for the facts of our time, and for those of the future, are that equal time is given to any viewpoint; false information spreads quickly; true information spreads quickly; and facts more easily escape from their creator's or owner's control." The role of compelling but false rumors was highlighted. Rather than fears of Russian influence over elections, the early concerns about fake and misleading information on the Internet revolved around warnings to the unwary of gang initiation attack rituals and kidney thefts from unwary business travelers (both of which were urban legends).

In the more than two decades since that article was written, problems of correctly perceiving reality have been exacerbated by the increasing polarization of society. It seems beyond question that the Internet and the growth of social media have played important roles in this process.

The journalism profession is under unprecedented pressure to respond to both the business and the procedural challenges precipitated by these communication technologies. The accuracy and fairness of news justifiably occupies a central place in the pantheon of public concerns. For most people the news they receive allows them to understand the world beyond their immediate sensory experience and come to conclusions about the organization of the world and their place in it. After all, "fake news" and biased news are said to affect matters of war and peace and even the destinies of nations.

This book explores how the relationship between journalism and the pursuit of truth is changing due to the growth of social media and ancillary

computer systems. The volume's chapters include inquiries into how news is perceived and identified, how news is presented to the public, and how the public responds to news. They also consider social media's effect on the craft of journalism, as well as the growing role of algorithms, big data, and automatic-content production regimes. The volume is interdisciplinary—encompassing philosophy, behavioral science, human-computer interaction, and digital and communication studies. This volume's aim is to focus insightfully and articulately on these issues in a way that will be of enduring relevance; the discussions about journalism now will be able to stand the test of time to inform current and future scholars. Each chapter addresses a different component of journalism in today's digital age and reflects on questions such as: What is different and what remains the same in terms of journalism's pursuit of truth now that social media has become such a prominent force in news gathering, dissemination, reinterpretation, and reader participation/responses? What are the implications for journalistic information gathering and truth claims? What are the implications for the social role of journalists and their media institutions? How have algorithms and other digital formats affected what is perceived and produced as news? In what ways does the interaction between journalists and social media affect democratic practices? The chapters offer a mix of critical and empirical work that considers journalism's past, present, and future roles in our lives and in society. Within its capacious umbrella, this book assembles leading scholars in the fields of journalism and communication studies, philosophy, and the social sciences to address critical questions of how we should understand journalism's changing landscape as it relates to fundamental questions about the role of truth and information in society.

The contributors and we are building on a foundation laid over decades. The founding figures of the United States recognized the value of a free press in the Constitution's Bill of Rights, a view that societies and governments in many parts of the world have adopted to varying degrees (and, equally, resisted by authoritarian governments everywhere else). It is now enshrined in the International Declaration of Human Rights and many constitutions and laws (including article 125 of the USSR's 1936 Constitution, thus exemplifying the distressing gap between word and practice when it comes to press freedom).

Complementing the legal framework of acknowledgment of the press's pivotal role in society has been the work of social scientists. In terms of outstanding analytical figures in the United States, Walter Lippmann

Exploring the Variety of Random Documents with Different Content

Stilicho, however, finding his influence in the Eastern Court was checked by Rufinus, concentrated his energies in the West, and practically ruled the Western Empire, and his weak young son-in-law, the Emperor Honorius. He kept the invading hordes at bay by conquest and treaty till his fall in 408, in which year the three persons depicted on these tablets—Stilicho, his wife Serena, adopted daughter and niece of Theodosius I., and their young son, Eucherius, were all cruelly murdered. This attribution would date it about 400, and an examination of the style supports the idea. The proportions are good, and the drapery well rendered, especially Serena's girdled tunic. The whole design shows originality, and the figures being portraits, the craftsman was thrown on his own resources and could not copy from classical sculpture.

The pose of the figures is somewhat uneasy, and contrasts unfavourably with the grace of the Bacchantes on the beautiful private diptych, part in the Musée de Cluny, and part in the Victoria and Albert Museum (No. 58), which probably formed the cover of a marriage contract between the families of the Nicomachi and the Symmachi. These tablets, though nearly of the same date, adhere closely to some Greek model, and though gaining much in beauty, lose in originality.

Camille Jullian in an interesting article[2] points out how in the midst of thoroughly Roman surroundings, it is only the energetic face of Stilicho which is not Roman in type and betrays his barbarian origin.

The short tunic worn by Stilicho is embroidered all over with pictures of his wife and son, his long chlamys having only portraits of the boy. It was a popular custom at this period to have the portraits of near relations embroidered on State garments, especially pictures of children. The poet Claudian in his panegyric on Stilicho, alludes to scenes from the lives of Eucherius and his little sisters being embroidered on the robe of their father. More often the portrait was on a square of stuff, or segment, which was let into the front of the garment (see Fig. 5).

The first diptych of certain date is that of Probus, Consul at Rome, 406, No. 2 (Fig. 3), and probably intended as a gift for the Emperor Honorius, who is depicted thereon as a figure of heavy proportions, borrowed from the common type of imperial statue. The head is evidently a portrait, as even at the most decadent period there was always a striving, even if an unsuccessful one, after portraiture and naturalism.

It is interesting to note the nimbus round the head of Honorius. In heathen times the nimbus was given to the immortals[3] and to images of the deified emperors. Christian art adopted it, but not invariably, and it appears to have been regarded more as an attribute of power than saintliness. Though Christ and his disciples and the Old Testament[4] heroes received it, it also encircled the heads of the great people of this world. We find it on the celebrated Justinian mosaics at S. Vitale in Ravenna, and on the medals of Justinian, and as late as the eleventh century on the plaque of the Emperor and Empress, Romanus and Eudoxia, in the Bibliothèque nationale at Paris (Fig. 20).

Next in date and infinitely coarser in execution is that of Felix, 428 (No. 3); the head is of a rugged type, and the Consul is represented standing alone at the door of his house. Asturias, 449 (No. 4), on the contrary, is throned high in front of a colonnade and accompanied by two attendants. In the tablet, however, of the Consul Boethius, 487 (No. 5), we see for the first time the Consul seated, *mappa* in hand, signalling the commencement of the games; but the design on the two leaves still has some variation, and on the second leaf he stands without the *mappa*. The diptych of Sividius, 488 (No. 6), furnishes the earliest example of the tablets of simpler type, which were probably given to people of lower degree. It is decorated by an inscribed medallion surrounded by foliated scrolls and four rosettes. All these are from the Western Empire.

4. FIRST LEAF OF THE DIPTYCH
OF ORESTES, 530 A.D.

With the commencement of the sixth century and the diptych of Areobindus, Consul at Constantinople, 506, we change to the Eastern Empire and find the formal type already fixed (see Fig. 4).

The Consul is seen sitting on the *sella curulis*, or consular chair. This has no back, and is usually made of ivory, with elaborately carved masks and claws of lions, and sometimes has small figures of Victory on the arms. On it is a richly embroidered cushion, rather ostentatiously showing; for to sit on a cushion in the Circus was only allowed to certain privileged classes. His feet rest on the *scabellum*, or stool, and he is clad in his gorgeous festival robe, which is a development of the purple triumphal garb of the victorious generals in earlier days.

The component parts of this dress are still under discussion, but according to Meyer[5] they consist of four parts:

    1st. The *paenula*. A long plain under-robe with long narrow sleeves;

    2nd. The *colobium*. A shorter embroidered over-tunic, with half length wide sleeves;

    3rd. An embroidered strip, which is laid over one shoulder and hangs down before and behind;

    4th. A nameless wrap of lighter material, embroidered or woven in a pattern.

The complete dress was called the *trabea* or *toga picta*.

Wilpert,[6] however, declares that Nos. 3 and 4 are one long piece equal to the ancient toga: without which, by a decree of 382, the Senators were forbidden to appear in public, and which by more and more folding was reduced into the narrow Byzantine *lorum*. The feet were covered with red leather shoes, fastened by crossed ribbons with falling ends.

The Consul holds in his right hand the *mappa circensis* and in his left the *scipio* or sceptre. These sceptres are crowned by many

devices—an eagle, busts of the imperial family and even two sitting figures.

As in the diptych of Orestes, there are often two female personifications of Rome and Constantinople; the former, on the Consul's right hand, holds a tessera in her right and a spear in her left hand. Her helmet has three crests, while that of Constantinople only one. The latter holds up her right hand and bears a shield or standard in the left. These cities are sometimes represented in little medallions on the Consul's chair (No. 17).

Very often above the head of the central figure were medallions with the portraits of imperial personages, or, perhaps, renowned ancestors. These niches were designed in imitation of those wooden shrines in which Roman households kept the waxen busts of their ancestors. Sometimes these diptychs were finished with a cross, and some have a medallion with the bust of Christ (No. 36).

The upper part was inscribed with the name and titles of the Consul, the last name always denominating the year.

Some early tablets have the name in the genitive, always a sign of antiquity, as *Nicomachorum* and *Symmachorum* (No. 58), *Felicis* (No. 3), *Lampadorium* (No. 33), and the plain tablets bearing the name *Gallieni Concessi V.C.*

V. Inl. or *Vir Inlustris*, *V. C.* or *Vir Clarissimus*, and even *Patric.* or *Patrician*, were personal titles and not hereditary. They denoted that the bearer had held high office. We also find *Præfectus*, and *Comes domesticorum equites*, or commander of the imperial bodyguard. To be called *Vir spectabilis*, or a respectable man, was then esteemed a high honour, while in our degenerate days it is almost considered an insult. But *Cons. ordin.* or *Consul ordinarius* was the real dignity, and with one exception always stood last.

In the lower division of the Orestes tablet, two servants pour money from sacks, doubtless commemorating the Consul's largesse to the people. In some diptychs they scatter prizes for the Games, and often there are lively representations of the chariot races (No.

33), and the fights with wild beasts. Areobindus has left us the most varied pictures. A row of spectators look on at the struggling gladiators (No. 9), or *Bestiarii* fighting with all sorts of wild beasts, lions and bears (No. 7), a bull-fight (No. 10), and on an anonymous diptych at Liverpool (No. 51), five magnificent elans are being attacked by hunters.

The fights do not appear to have been very dangerous for the men; the scenes are often quite comic from the numerous precautions taken, especially on the Basilewsky tablet at St. Petersburg (No. 52). The fighters, carefully packed in leather protectors, bolt through doors with peep-holes, or climb into a sort of crow's-nest, curling up their ferocious opponents at the end of extremely long spears. In fact there was every means of escape, trap-doors, turnstile exits, and even dummy figures to divert the attention of the animals. Perhaps it was necessary, for we read of Pompey providing six hundred lions for a single show, and of Trajan celebrating his Dacian victories by the slaughter of eleven thousand beasts. If these little precautions had not been taken, the entertainment might have ended abruptly, and more in favour of the lower animals than the lords of creation.

The fights of the gladiators represented on the Besançon tablet must have been more exhibitions of skill than struggles to the death.

These gladiatorial fights ceased after the generous act of the monk Telemachus. He, after travelling to Rome from the far East with the set purpose, stept down into the arena, at the triumphal games of the Emperor Honorius (404), and tried to part the combatants. He was stoned to death by the enraged multitude; but his death was not unavailing, for his memory was respected, and these degrading exhibitions were for ever abolished.

Basilius, Consul at Constantinople, 541, was the last of the Consuls before the Emperor Justinian, impatient of the empty show of power, absorbed the office among his other titles, and from that time the Emperors always went through the form of being made Consul once on their accession. Basilius is represented on the first

leaf of his diptych (No. 37) standing by the figure of Constantinople, who holds a standard on a gigantic pole. Below is a minute chariot race. On the second leaf, which has been cut, a figure of Victory holds an oval medallion portrait of the Consul. Below is an eagle with outstretched wings. These two leaves, though widely separated, were proved to be a pair by the likeness of the thin sickly face of the Consul on each leaf. This diptych varies considerably from the contemporary design, and though all idea of the real structure of the body, and of the hang of drapery from the limbs has disappeared, still it shows so much originality and clever portraiture, that Graeven, after a careful consideration of the fashion of the dress, attributes it to an earlier Consul Basilius of 480, at a time before the grouping had become so stereotyped.

The number of these carvings given away was so considerable that all were not of the same richness. There are many tablets of simpler design and rougher make, several being smaller and in camel bone (No. 43). These were, as already stated, intended for persons of lower degree.

The decoration consisted usually of a medallion, inscribed, or with the bust of the Consul, surrounded by foliated scrolls (Areobindus has left several of this latter kind among his numerous diptychs). The Barbarini leaf has a charming variation, the bust being inclosed in a garland bound with hanging ribbons (No. 41). Some are fully inscribed (No. 35), and others have only a monogram like that formed from the Greek letters of the name Areobindus (No. 12).

Justinianus, Consul at Constantinople in 541, and afterwards Emperor, has, in addition to his names, a Latin dedication framed in a circular moulding of delicate honeysuckle pattern. The diptych of Philoxenus at the Bibliothèque nationale (No. 29) is quite a new departure. Three medallions, linked by knotted cords, contain the portrait of the Consul, his name and titles in Latin, and below, a female bust, who, some think, represents his wife. She is more likely to be the personification of Constantinople, judging from the

absence of the fashionable headgear, the hair being simply parted under a narrow diadem, and from the standard she grasps in her hand, which is embroidered with a garland in the same fashion as that held by Constantinople in the Basilius diptychon. The faces are well characterized and the whole workmanship is excellent, round it is an elaborate border, the spaces being filled in by a Greek verse, which runs as follows:

"I Philoxenus being Consul, offer this present to the wise Senate."

There is a simpler diptych of this Consul at Liverpool, which bears a Greek dedication to a friend.

The most important among the anonymous consular diptychs is the fine one preserved in the Cathedral Treasury at Halberstadt (No. 38) on which the bearded Consul stands among his friends, the group being varied on each leaf. Above, in a narrow division, are two small imperial figures seated on a wide throne with the figures of Rome and Constantinople; at the back stands a Victory, as in the similar design on a coin of Theodosius I. Below, in another narrow division, are pathetic groups of captive barbarians. The inscription has been cut from the top, but the whole style points to an early date, and Meyer places it between those of Asturias and Boethius in the third quarter of the fifth century.

The tablet of Lampadius at Brescia is especially interesting for the large picture it gives of a chariot race, showing the quadrigas rushing past the *spina* or turning post.

The Consul, clad in the *trabea* sits with two companions behind the richly carved *cancelli* or balustrade. The only similar representation is on the magisterial diptych at Liverpool (No. 51), but the identification is very confusing. In the Brescia tablet the central *trabea*-clad figure and the man on his left both hold the *mappa*, but on that at Liverpool there is, more reasonably, only one starter, but he is on the left of the central figure, who holds a libation cup instead of the *mappa*, and all three figures have the same un-consular dress. Meyer points out an inscription announcing

the restoration of the Flavian Amphitheatre by Caecina Felix Lampadius, in the second half of the fifth century; the inscription being in the genitive is also a sign of antiquity. But the smooth and rather too minute workmanship connect it with the best diptychs of the early sixth century, and so Molinier attributes it to Lampadius, Consul at Constantinople in 530, and the same year as our old friend Orestes (Fig. 4), and the smooth finish of the Lampadius tablet can be contrasted, not altogether unfavourably, with the rougher modelling of what had become by then almost a provincial school.

The nameless consular diptych of Bourges (No. 39), divides into two equal registers. Above, the bearded Consul is seated between two guards, on one leaf these have long hair, and may have been intended for Goths, and in the corners of the arch are two eagles exactly like those on the St. Gregory diptych at Monza (No. 44). In each lower half is a *bestiarius* transfixing lions and leopards with his spear. The treatment, if rough, is free, and the grouping of the lions is somewhat similar to that in the Adam tablet at the Bargello (Fig. 6). It is probably fifth or early sixth century.

Meyer quotes the text of Gregory of Tours, who describes the installation of Clovis the Frankish king as Consul of the West in 508, with all the pomp and honour of Roman custom, and repeats the rather problematic suggestion that this diptych commemorates the occasion.

The ivory tablet in the British Museum, called the Apotheosis of Romulus, from a very doubtful reading of the monogram, is probably also of the fifth or even sixth century, though its thoroughly heathen subject seems to necessitate an earlier date. The composition is most elaborate. Below, the Consul, clad in the toga, is seated in an architectural triumphal car drawn by four elephants, each with their driver. In the centre he is seen in miniature driving in a quadriga, which bears him upward, preceded by eagles, from the funeral pile to the heavens, where he is again represented in the hands of winged genii, who present him to the assembled gods.

This is interesting as being an example of that continuous method of composition, in which the same figure is repeated acting in sequence. This method was introduced into Roman art about the Augustan age, and was largely continued by Christian art, especially in the MSS. It gained great popularity, and for a while it seemed doubtful whether the "continuous" or the "episodic" method would be the leading feature in modern art.[7]

Several consular diptychs have been turned to Christian religious uses by slight alterations of the figures, and by the removal of inscriptions and scenes from the games.

The most important transformed diptych is in the Cathedral Treasury at Monza (No. 44), which now represents St. Gregory and King David. The alterations have been considerable, and have given rise to many differences of opinion, but the latest writers, with the exception of Meyer, have gone back to the opinion of the earliest, Gori, who declared the consular origin of these tablets.

St. Gregory did not die till 604, so could not have been canonized before the seventh century, and the style is fully that of the consular diptychs in the first half of the preceding century. The saints are depicted in full consular robes, the right hand raised with the *mappa* in the act of flinging it into the arena, and in the left the *scipio*.

The background has the typical decorated arch, supported by cannelated pilasters, over the capitals of which are rectangular spaces having the names of Gregory and David cut with a deep background, as if to destroy any under carving. Above the arch is a cross similar to that on Fig. 4, on each side are two eagles of the Bourges pattern (No. 39). David sits on a curule chair, his feet resting on a stool in good consular fashion. On each side of the chair, above the leg, is a square with deep cut carving. These squares might have contained the now obliterated busts of Rome and Constantinople, which decorate that part on the diptych of Anastasius (No. 17). In fact the knot and twisted stalks almost follow the outlines of a head and shoulders. There is more deep carving let

in a narrow groove between the pilasters and the smooth background, all of which has a Carlovingian character.

St. Gregory has been given a tonsure and his hair has been cut at the expense of his ears, which have been cut away too. The robes are untouched, but Gregory's sceptre has been altered to a cross. Above the head of David are faint traces of an inscription on the smooth background, and on the other leaf there is a later inscription referring to Gregory's Antiphonary, to a copy of which the tablets formerly acted as a cover.

On a reliquary book cover at Prague is another consul changed into St. Peter (No. 45). This figure has suffered considerably, for the *trabea* has been so much smoothed that it is hardly distinguishable. The *mappa* has been turned into a *volumen* or roll, the *scipio* into a key, and the feet have been bared.

There appears to have been a class of diptychs, each leaf consisting of five pieces joined together by ivory beading or metal mountings. The four pieces were arranged like a frame round the central and most important plaque. (See the later Christian book cover, [Fig. 10](#).) Meyer suggests they were especially intended for gifts to members of the imperial family.

Some of these five-piece panels were more probably intended as book covers, but one undoubted consular diptych in five parts still survives, though the pieces are scattered. Two horizontal strips are in the collection of the Marchese di Trivulzio at Milan. The upper one, with a bust of Constantinople borne by two winged figures, is inscribed with a dedication to an Emperor, while the lower strip, which is carved with barbarians rushing forward to present tribute (the same motive as that of the Magi), bears the Consul's titles.

Two upright pieces of slightly varying width, on a book cover in the Munich Library, represent a consul in the act of walking to his right, and carrying what is probably a congratulatory address to the Emperor, his hands being religiously veiled. Above and behind him is an Imperial Guard, with large shield and spear, his robe embroidered

on the shoulders, and his neck encircled by a collar from whence hangs a bulla, just as we see them on the mosaic in St. Vitale at Ravenna.

The narrower piece has a rigidly vertical design. Below is the full face figure of a man holding a long staff, and above, the upper portion of a figure of Victory, holding up over her head a wreath containing a bust of the Emperor, the exact enlargement of those Victories which so often stand on the arms of the curule chair (No. 17).

Meyer considers that these two unequal pieces formed the two sides, but the complete want of balance in the composition makes Molinier's opinion that they both formed the right side the more probable. This increases the number of pieces to seven, but the Victory having no border may have been sawn off the central plaque. On the other hand, in the five-piece panel at Ravenna ([Fig. 10](#)), the central plaque is divided horizontally by a beading, if not in two separate pieces. If we consider that these two pieces formed the right side, and multiply their combined width for the left side, and then compare the total of the two sides with the width of the horizontal strips, there is still ample space for a central plaque representing the Emperor.

Meyer adds to the list of diptychs the celebrated five-piece tablet in the Barbarini Library at Rome. The upper and lower strips are of exactly the same character, and in the central plaque the Emperor (probably Constantine the Great) is seen on a rearing horse, under whose feet is a woman with her lap full of fruit, who personifies some conquered country. In the left piece is the figure of a soldier bringing a Victory, and the other side, which should have a representation like the Munich Consul, is lost.

Molinier emphatically declares this could not have been a consular diptych, as there is no trace of inscription; but suggests that it was the cover of a book intended for the Emperor.

There is one more diptych in exceedingly high relief, which may possibly be classed among the consular series, the date and subject of which is still a matter of much discussion. One leaf is in the Bargello at Florence (Fig. 5), and the other in the Vienna Museum (No. 57).

The Florentine portion represents a personage clad in a robe blazing with jewels, and standing under an elaborate edifice, holding orb and sceptre. The Vienna leaf is practically the same, only the figure is seated on a throne set with precious stones, and extends the right hand in the same manner as the Empress Eudoxia on Fig. 20, whilst the left hand supports the orb. The sex of this personage was long disputed, but now it is considered by most writers to represent a woman, both from the modelling of the form and from the dress.

The robes of Emperor and Empress were very similar, but on examining the mosaics of St. Vitale at Ravenna, we find that though Justinian and Theodora both wear the *chlamys*, hers is more lavishly decorated, and she wears a large collar of pendant jewels, while Justinian has the *fibula*. But the head-dresses were always tolerably distinctive till considerably later. Ladies of high rank all wore a kind of wig-like turban, sometimes double, as in the case of Serena (No. 1). That it was a turban and not hair is evident from the striped pattern on that of Serena. This was often bound with jewels, and the imperial family wore diadems with long strings of jewels hanging over the ears, as on the Bargello tablet. These pendants were often, but not invariably, worn by the Emperor, but his diadem fitted close on to his forehead without the intervening wig, as we see on the interesting ninth century casket in the Museo Kircheriano in Rome, where both head-dresses are represented. A large segment is inserted on the front of her robe by a jewelled edging, on which we see the portrait of a chubby boy dressed in the *trabea*, and wielding *mappa* and *scipio*, a diadem with pendants being on his head.

Having decided that the figure is intended for a lady, there remains the vexed question of who she is. Molinier thinks she is of

Byzantine origin, not wrought with the delicate art of the tenth to the eleventh centuries, but earlier and coarser, and going through the various historic characters in search of a name, he attributes the portrait to the Empress Irene, widow of Leo IV., and long Regent for her ten-year-old son Constantine IV., for she alone would dare to be portrayed throned, and with all the attributes of sovereignty. It was Irene who, in the middle of the Iconoclastic period, convened a council of the Church, repealed the new laws, and encouraged the use of religious images throughout her realm.

This attribution would bring the date of the diptych down to the end of the eighth century, and later than the style would seem to warrant; and it is vigorously opposed by Graeven, who declares that after the first half of the sixth century, there were no more purely secular representations; and that the coins of Irene represent her with both diadem and sceptre surmounted by a cross.

To this may be added the affinity of the architecture with that on diptychs of the early sixth century, as the eagles on the top, which are exactly like those surmounting the Bourges (No. 39) and St. Gregory (No. 44) diptychs. Also the columns with tightly wound curtains are extremely near in design to those on the tablets of the Poet and Muse at Monza (No. 63). Curtains, however, with horizontal stripes were fairly constant all through early art, but were less used in strictly Byzantine Art than in any other.

5. LEAF OF THE DIPTYCH OF AMALASUNTHA(?)
Italian, sixth century

Graeven having given good reasons for placing this ivory in the first half of the sixth century, suggests that it represents Amalasuntha, daughter of Theodoric, who, by right of conquest and the reluctant consent of the Emperor of the East, was King of Italy

from 493-526; and who, by good government, had brought about some measure of order, and induced a slight renaissance of the arts. Amalasuntha governed at Pavia in the name of her young son Athalric (Fig. 5).

Graeven suggests that these two are also represented in the medallions on the diptych of Orestes (Fig. 4). Athalric is represented without a diadem, like his grandfather on the gold medal, and he wears a coat in Gothic fashion, like that on the coins of Theodatus, his successor, and his mother's second husband. Amalasuntha attempted to control Theodatus in the same manner as her dead son, but he resented the interference and had her murdered, thus severing the last link with the enlightened *régime* of Theodoric, and plunging the country once more in darkness and barbarism.

There still remain for attention the Private Diptychs, which were given away to celebrate a marriage, or a happy recovery to health, or some other domestic reason. The subjects were usually mythological, and the compositions, sometimes of great beauty, were chiefly borrowed from Classical Art.

First, and by far the most beautiful, is the magnificent diptych of the noble families of the Nicomachi and the Symmachi; the two leaves are, respectively, in the Musée de Cluny at Paris and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The wonderful preservation of the surface shows the soft modelling of the ivory, and though the Paris leaf has been cruelly shattered and several pieces lost, the soft flow of the drapery is still sufficiently visible.

It is rather saddening to think of the long periods which must elapse in the history of ivory carving, from this time when drapery was still a thing of beauty, showing the form it seemed to hide, on through phases in which the garments were laid on in a series of flat lumps, or covered with a multitude of meaningless lines, until, finally, it emerges in Gothic art, no longer diaphanous and clinging, it is true, but drapery, real drapery, hanging in long swaying folds and falling round the feet in delicate little heaps in a manner whose perfection was the sole prerogative of the French craftsmen.

Between the Nicomachus diptych and the famous Diptychon Quirinalis of Brescia (No. 59), there is a great abyss. On one leaf of the latter are carved Hippolytus and Phædra, a poor copy of some Greek model; on the other Diana and Endymion.

Meyer thinks it probable that in the representation of the chaste Diana, coyly saluting her lover under the chin, we may find the portrait of a Roman lady. Certainly the attitude of the lady's left hand, firmly placed on her hip, could have been copied from no Greek original, and further, these two figures have curtains behind them and embroidery on the shoulders of their tunics, after the popular fashion of the fifth and sixth centuries.

It is interesting to note the architectural background, an arch supported by two pilasters, which is very similar to that on the St. Gregory diptych, except that here the string-course which supports the scallop shell has not been cut away as in that at Monza.

Liverpool Museum has a fine pair of tablets representing Æsculapius and Hygeia (No. 61); which undoubtedly refer to recovery from an illness. The figure of Æsculapius appears to be taken from the Farnese Hercules. Another small ivory of this subject is in a private collection in Zurich; the figures vary considerably, but are evidently of the same period—mid sixth century.

There is one more diptych in that wonderful collection in the Treasury of the Basilica at Monza; representing an elderly bald-headed man, whose heavy torso and fat puffy face are well characterized, though the pose is rather awkwardly rendered. He appears to be a poet, for writing tablets and a *volumen* lie at his feet, and on the adjoining leaf we see a Muse playing on the lyre. But from her matronly figure and his uncompromising ugliness, we appear to be dealing with another of those portrait diptychs, like the one at Brescia, in which the noble Roman had his portrait taken in fancy dress.

There are two most interesting tablets now in the Bibliothèque nationale at Paris, originally from Sens, where they long served as a

binding to the thirteenth century MS. containing "The Office of Fools," or that read on the first day of the year, and in which was incorporated many customs derived from the Roman Saturnalia. The decoration is frankly pagan, and is somewhat similar in style to the sarcophagi of the third century, on which the various scenes are superimposed in much the same manner.

On one leaf Bacchus Helios is represented clasping a thyrsis in one hand and an empty wine-cup in the other, while he stands upright in a car drawn by a male and female centaur. Above are lively scenes of the vintage, little figures gathering grapes and gaily treading out the wine. At the bottom of the tablet a group of sea-gods are seen disporting themselves among dolphins and other fish.

In the centre of the other tablet Diana Lucifera, rises like the moon from the sea; she wears a crescent on her brow, and round her head floats a cloud of airy drapery. She carries a lighted torch, and the two bulls which draw her chariot bound rapidly upward out of the sea. Above are a satyr and nymph, some women, Cupid and the tiny figure of Venus in a shell, and below, lying on the waters, is a figure of the Sea, surrounded by fish and holding a curious crustacean in her hand.

These diptychs have passed through many vicissitudes during the lapse of time. In the Victoria and Albert Museum there is a later carving on the back of a mutilated consular diptych, from which the whole surface has been smoothed away, leaving only a deeper outline here and there. This gives an idea of the fate of a large number of carved ivories, and of our great loss; and it is entirely to the adoption of diptychs for liturgical purposes by the Church that we owe the preservation of those that remain. The bishops, being high functionaries, may have received them as gifts, and others were votive.

The Council of Mopsueste, in 550, ordered the churches to keep the diptychs, and the names of those persons to be prayed for during the celebration of mass to be inscribed in them, in the

following categories, all having a more or less local connection with the particular church:

> Firstly: Neophytes, or newly baptized;

> Secondly: Benefactors, Sovereigns and Bishops;

> Thirdly: Saints and Martyrs; and

> Lastly: The Faithful Dead "in the sleep of peace."

People were very anxious to have their names inscribed, and fearful of being scratched out for heresy.

For the dead bishops the prayer was less for them, than to them, from which comes the word "canonize," or to be named in the Canon of the Mass. On the inner side of the diptych of Clementinus, at Liverpool, there is in roughly written Greek letters a prayer for the clergy of a church of St. Agatha, and for "our Shepherd Hadrian the Patriarch," who can be none other than Pope Hadrian (†795); this diptych probably came from a church in Sicily, for Greek was still spoken, and the patron saint of Palermo is St. Agatha.

Lists of bishops were inscribed, and when the list grew too long parchment leaves were inserted. Whole services were bound in these carvings, and the covers of many of the oldest MSS. are of diptychs, set in an elaborate border of goldsmith's work, to increase the size as well as to enhance the beauty.

CHAPTER II

LATIN AND BYZANTINE IVORIES

I. LATIN, LATINO-BYZANTINE AND THE EARLY BYZANTINE IVORIES

At the end of the last chapter it was shown how the Church had preserved a large number of consular diptychs, either unchanged or altered to suit Christian iconography. To that list must be added several ivory carvings with religious subjects, yet so closely connected with the class of Private Diptychs, that it is more than probable that they also have undergone transformation.

The most important among these are a fragmentary panel in the Museo Civico at Bologna and the celebrated Ivory Book of Rouen Cathedral.

On the Bologna fragment is the figure of a bearded man of heavy type, in a well designed but poorly executed robe; he clasps a roll in his left land and beneath his neatly sandalled feet is a stool, always a mark of honour, in the side of which is a deepened space with the name "Petrus" rudely inscribed. Above, in the broken pediment, is a niche with the bust of a bearded man, labelled "Marcus." The whole is surrounded by a handsome ovolo moulding, as are also the panels of the Rouen Book Cover, which may be of a slightly later date, but they must both be placed early in the sixth century. The Rouen carvings represent St. Peter and St. Paul, without a doubt, for they are already of that iconographical type which had become fixed by the end of the preceding century, St. Paul with a bald head and long pointed beard, and St. Peter with thick hair and a round curling beard; but it is very likely that the figures on both the Bologna and

Rouen tablets were originally intended for authors or poets as on the series of complimentary diptychs.

The architecture lends credence to this theory, the cannelated columns and pediment flanked by so-called "doves," being much the same as that on the various sixth century diptychs. The drapery too, has been copied from good models, that of St. Peter, with the right arm buried in the folds of his toga, is in imitation of the famous Lateran Sophocles. Another proof of alteration is the manner in which he holds a narrow key in a grasp wide enough to contain a roll as large as that in the Bologna fragment.

There is a diptych in Tongres Cathedral,[8] which has a history carrying it back to the ninth century. The names of the Bishops of Tongres from 855-959 being engraved on the back.

It evidently belongs to the large class of ivories of mixed Latino-Byzantine origin. The vine scroll border, the flat relief and rather grooved working of the draperies, also the peculiar stockings and oriental shoes are all features of this class. St. Paul raises his hand to bless in the Greek manner, with only two fingers extended. The interpretation of this gesture is variously given, many say it is symbolical of the dual nature of Our Lord and of the Trinity.

Byzantine, equally with Italian art, sprang from the last *floraison* of Roman Art, and grew up at Constantinople, the New Rome, but much modified by Greek and Syrian influences. At first the culture of the two Empires was so linked together, that it is the merest shade which distinguishes Roman Art in the East and West. The division widens, and the two branches stretch out, one, the purely Latin, soon to wither and almost perish, and the other to grow into that spreading tree of Byzantine Art, whose branches have scattered fruit in every part of Europe and the Levant.

The latest bloom on the purely Latin branch, before it commenced to decay, included ivories of singular beauty, as the splendid casket at Brescia and the famous Carrand diptych in the Bargello at Florence (Figs. 5 and 6). This carving is of superb finish,

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